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Fumigating the U.N.

A KGB vacation spa — that's what the United Nations headquarters in New York has amounted to, with Soviet spies crawling out of the crevices. Holiday's over. President Reagan has ordered the Kremlin to cut the number of its employees from 275 to 170 — a reduction of 38 percent. Note the percentage. U.S. intelligence experts estimate that 40 percent of all Soviet "diplomats" are spies.

Mr. Reagan did not act without provocation. In 1985 the U.S. arrested more Americans for spying than in any year since World War II. The Soviet U.N. Mission served as "control" for many of them. Also, the Soviets long have used the U.N. to recruit spies from Third World countries. Mr. Reagan has severely crimped such subversion.

Kremlin boss Mikhail Gorbachev, who works closely with the KGB and guards its

interests, cannot be expected to take the expulsion lying down. When Britain's Margaret Thatcher expelled 31 Soviet spies last September, he retaliated by expelling 31 British diplomats. A State Department spokesman warns, however, that "if the Soviets retaliate, we are prepared to reciprocate."

Splendid. For every American the Soviets expel, we should "reciprocate" by expelling two Soviets. Figure it this way. Adding up the U.N. delegation, the Soviet Embassy in Washington, and the San Francisco consulate, the Soviets (after the Reagan cuts) still will have 490 "diplomats" in America. By contrast, the U.S. has 200 diplomats at its Moscow Embassy and 28 at its Leningrad consulate — a total of 228, or fewer than half what the Soviets keep here. For real reciprocity, a two-for-one expulsion ratio is the thing.